



As Allen Premium Outlets open back up after last month's devastating mass shooting, survivors are left to pick up the pieces and grapple with the weight of

# 'A SECOND CHANCE AT LIFE'



DEVINEE AMIN | MERCURY STAFF

Mourners embrace each other at a memorial honoring lives lost in the mass shooting on May 6. "There's before, and then there's after," one mourner said. "We will never be the same."

## Four students recall harrowing experiences from second deadliest shooting in U.S. this year

STORY BY: FATIMAH AZEEM | Editor-in-Chief

There were a conglomeration of emotions — eerie and sharp — when political science sophomore Mireya Rodriguez stepped foot into Steve Madden for the first day of work since *that day*. Tying her uniform, she loaded shipments of summer sandals and pumps for customers like she would've done at any other shoe retail job. But this location isn't like any other. Just a month prior, shoppers took shelter here when a shooter opened fire on Allen Premium Outlets.

A month after the mass shooting in Allen, Texas that took eight lives, the Allen Premium Outlet Mall opened back up on June 7. Just 20 minutes driving distance from campus, the location is a popular spot for Comets to shop — or at least it was.

Rodriguez is one of several UTD students that witnessed the horrors of the shooting on May 6. She was working as a manager at Steve Madden, organizing inventory with her coworker and close friend, psychology sophomore Jordan Hamiter, when she first heard the gunshots. It was there that they hid for hours, waiting for police to apprehend the gunman and evacuate civilians. Rodriguez went viral on TikTok, with over 500,000 views, for sharing this experience with the world and her unrest for lenient gun laws.

"I am 20 years old, and my mom cradled me for the first time in a long time the other night," Rodriguez said. "I remember thinking — that would never happen here. We were just five feet away from him when

he was face down on the ground ... I don't know what I would've done if I knew it was him then."

A few days after the shooting, Rodriguez's professors began administering final examinations for the semester. She made use of extensions and the Student Counseling Center, and Donal Skinner, dean of the Honors College, even reached out to extend his sympathies and support. Her friend Hamiter, though, turned to school for a distraction, immersing herself in her studies and submitting her psychology finals on time as if nothing had happened.

"I don't have much support," Hamiter said. "[Mireya] is pretty much the only support I've had. After the shooting, I was doing homework because no one called me. I found out my brother got engaged right before it happened. I know that upset [my parents] a lot, what happened to me. But I wish they would've called me. I might not be here right now."

Allen PD, the FBI and the Texas DPS verified the shooter's neo-Nazi ideation in a press conference in early June, noting Nazi tattoos and extremist social media posts. Authorities haven't determined a clear motive, but they believe that location was of prime interest to the shooter. About 20% of Allen residents identify as Asian and four shooting victims were of Asian descent — as such, community members have expressed fear and unease about whether the shooting was a hate crime.

*This feature has been excerpted to fit the spacing constraints of publication. To learn more about the survivors and the aftermath of the shooting, visit utdm Mercury.com*



FATIMAH AZEEM | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Hamiter, Rodriguez and hundreds of demonstrators gathered at an Allen high school to advocate for stricter gun laws in May. The pair are hungry to make change, "so no one goes through this again."

“ I remember thinking — that would never happen here. We were just five feet away from him. ”

- Mireya Rodriguez  
Allen shooting survivor



MIREYA RODRIGUEZ | COURTESY



DEVINEE AMIN | MERCURY STAFF

Police stand guard after reports of gunfire at Allen Outlets. Days later, the shooting zone was transformed into a memorial by an outpour of love from the community.

## HOW 'THAT DAY' WENT DOWN

### • TIMELINE CHART •

SATURDAY, MAY 6, 2023

3:36 P.M.  
THE SHOOTER EXITED A SILVER SEDAN, RAISED HIS RIFLE AND STARTED SHOOTING.

DISPATCH RECEIVED A 911 CALL ABOUT THE SHOTS FIRED AT THE MALL.

IRVIN WALKER II ENCOURAGED THE SHOOTING AS HIS CAR WAS IN FRONT OF THE SHOOTER. HE WAS SHOT AND ACCIDENTALLY SHIFTED HIS CAR INTO NEUTRAL.

3:37 P.M.  
AN ALLEN OFFICER WAS NEARBY ON AN UNRELATED CALL. WHEN HE HEARD THE GUN SHOTS, HE NOTIFIED DISPATCH THAT THERE WAS A MASS SHOOTING.

"WE GOT SHOTS FIRED AT THE OUTLET MALL," HE REPORTED AND ASKED FOR MAXIMUM BACKUP.

THE OFFICER HAS NEUTRALIZED THE SHOOTER MINUTES LATER.

IN FRONT OF THE H&M STORE, THE MENDOZA SISTERS WITH THEIR PARENTS AND THE CHO FAMILY FACED THE SHOOTER WITHOUT ANY COVERAGE BUT A TREE BRUSH.

IRVIN EXITED HIS CAR TO FIND HELP. A SECURITY GUARD TRIED TO BRING IRVIN TO SAFETY BUT GOT SHOT HIMSELF. SO IRVIN CONTINUED BY HIMSELF TO THE CLOSEST STORE.

THERE WERE VICTIMS AT THE FRANCESCA'S NEW BALANCE AND H&M.

3:43 P.M.  
THE FIRST MEDICS ARRIVED ON SCENE.

3:49 P.M.  
POLICE ASKED FOR AMBULANCES FOR THE VICTIMS ONE BY ONE.

4:03 P.M.  
ALLEN FIRE CHIEF JOHNATHAN BOYD CALLS ALLEN'S CITY MANAGER ABOUT THE SHOOTING.

4:20 P.M.  
ALLEN POLICE ANNOUNCED THAT LAW ENFORCEMENT WAS PRESENT AND ASKED THE PUBLIC TO AVOID THE AREA.

6-7 P.M.  
HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE CONCENTRATED NEAR THE POLICE BLOCKADE. SOME OF THEM WAITED FOR FAMILY MEMBERS. ALLEN POLICE ANNOUNCED THAT THERE WAS NO LONGER AN ACTIVE THREAT AND THERE WERE NINE VICTIMS AT THE HOSPITAL.

9 P.M.  
AUTHORITIES REPORTED ON THE FATALITY AND INJURIES FROM THE SHOOTING.

10:16 P.M.  
THE SCENE IS COMPLETELY CLEAR OF THE ALLEN FIRE DEPARTMENT FIRE MARSHAL OFFICE'S POST-INCIDENT ANALYSIS REPORT UNITS.

CREDITS: THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

OLUWASEUN ADEYEMI | MERCURY STAFF





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and a correction will be  
published in this space in  
a future issue.

In the last issue of *The Mercury*, a brief on the library's new 24 hour schedule mistated its hours. The McDermott Library is now open for 24 hours continuously from 11 a.m on Sunday to 8 p.m on Friday as well as Saturday from 11 a.m to 8 p.m. Comets need an active Comet Card to enter after 10:30 p.m., and the library's assistant dean of public services is named Travis Goode.

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TIPA  
Intercollegiate Press  
The Mercury is a proud member of both the Associated Collegiate Press and the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association.

# UTDPD Blotter

## April 19

• At 9:16 p.m., an unaffiliated person assaulted a UTD student causing injuries and left the scene.



## April 23

• At 3:59 p.m., an unaffiliated male was arrested for violating a criminal trespass warning



## May 13

• At 12:26 a.m., several UTD students reported a male UTD student made them feel uncomfortable after he approached them in the swimming pool.



## May 15

• At 3:07 p.m., a subject was arrested for indecent exposure.



## May 18

• At 9:08 a.m., a UTD staff member reported an incident that ocured with another UTD staff member.



- VEHICULAR INCIDENT
- THEFT
- DRUGS & ALCOHOL
- OTHER

MAP: UTD | COURTESY



## UNITING THROUGH MIND, SPIRIT AND BODY



Participants doing Vrukshasana — a tree pose which helps strengthen the ligaments in your feet.



Instructor and participants doing the Trikonasana, which helps relieve stiffness and enhancing flexibility of the hamstrings.



### PARTH GHUMARE Mercury Staff

In a vibrant celebration of the International Day of Yoga, Hindu YUVA organized a rejuvenating and restful event at The Plinth. Urhsaha Ramesh, a UTD alumni, practitioner of Ashtanga Vinyasa and 200-hour certified yoga instructor, led a group of 30 enthusiastic participants through an immersive and transformative yoga experience. Under Ramesh's skillful guidance, participants delved into various yoga asanas, or poses, integrating breathing techniques and mindfulness, to unlock the benefits of yoga for the mind, body and soul.

Through this event, Hindu YUVA said they aimed to promote a sense of unity

and fostera greater understanding and appreciation for yoga. This event served to go beyond just the physical aspects of Yoga and celebrated the cultural and spiritual dimensions that are inherent in its practice. Hindu YUVA said the International Day of Yoga serves as a global platform to honor the ancient wisdom of Hindu spirituality and philosophy. It is a day for individuals across the world to embrace the essence of authentic yoga and its contributions to today's world.

"It felt so fulfilling to come back on campus and teach students yoga. I feel really happy that yoga is picking up and people are more enthusiastic about physical and mental wellness these days," Ramesh said.



Instructor Ramesh explaining the benefits of Suryanamaskara, the full body exercise in the form of a sun salutation.



# UTD commemorates black freedom through Juneteenth celebration

TEJAL DHAN  
Managing Editor

On June 15, several UTD organizations took part in a celebration for Juneteenth, which was made a federal holiday in 2021. Featuring food, music and dance along with volunteering and tributes, the event honored the history of black Americans.

The day started off with a service project hosted by the Office of Student Volunteerism and the Multicultural Center. Named the Bruce August Jr. Juneteenth Day of Service in honor of UTD's former Multicultural Center director who passed away in April, the project allowed Comets to pack meals for struggling families. According to Yvette Pearson, vice president of diversity, equity, and inclusion, this year's Juneteenth celebration was held in memory of August.

"One thing I like about what we've been able to do with this celebration is really honor Bruce's legacy and what he brought to making this event and this holiday a reality on our campus," Pearson said, "Bruce was a man who exemplified community. He exemplified integrity. He was one of those people who was all things to all people. And we saw it when he was here with us, but we saw it even more when he wasn't here anymore."

Tributes to August were made throughout the day by students and staff alike. The importance of his presence at UTD became clearer as the event progressed. Juneteenth at UTD commemorated his legacy by emphasizing community- the celebration was a joint effort made by many organizations, including the Black Faculty and Staff Alliance, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Student Union, along with aid from the McDermott Library,

UTDPD and the Center for Students in Recovery.

"It's about bringing folks together," Pearson said. "As I mentioned, it's been a day of events and we've had partnerships with... So many different offices that have come together to play some role. So it's about not just the Multicultural Center who's leading this event, but how we bring each other together to advance our goals."

The main celebration took place from 5-7 p.m. in the Visitor Center atrium. Speeches were given by members who planned the event, after which Pearson sang "Lift Every Voice and Sing," a hymn that symbolizes liberation for African Americans. Soul food, or traditionally African American food, was served to attendees, including macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes and gravy. One of the most memorable parts of the event was a musical dance performance by Bandan Koro, an African drum and dance ensemble. Towards the end of their performance, the ensemble even invited members of the crowd to dance with them, exemplifying the diversity and community of UTD.

"We're a campus of people with so many richly diverse identities, of course," Pearson said. "And for us to learn more about each other's cultures and histories, it's really important to help us create an environment where we can all thrive together. So, one of the biggest things that comes out of these types of events is the education. And that comes from more than just learning history or whatever. It comes from celebrating the culture."

To learn more about the history and importance of Juneteenth, visit [utdmercury.com](#).



The annual Juneteenth celebration at UTD brought together diverse groups of people to celebrate culture and history with food, music and dance. The performing African drum ensemble, Bandan Koro, even invited members of the crowd to dance with them.



TEJAL DHAN | MANAGING EDITOR

<b>January 1, 1863</b> <b>Emancipation Proclamation</b> President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation during the Civil War, declaring that all slaves would be free in the rebellious states.	<b>June 19, 1865</b> <b>Juneteenth</b> General Gordon Granger and the Union Soldiers landed in Galveston, TX with the news about the Civil War ending and that the enslaved are now free. This was the day all slaves were considered free.	<b>December 6, 1865</b> <b>13th Amendment</b> Congress' bill passing the 13th amendment to abolish slavery in the United States was officially ratified.	<b>1877</b> <b>Jim Crow Laws</b> Segregation laws that separated white and black people from being integrated in public areas.
<b>September 4, 1957</b> <b>Little Rock 9</b> Nine black students boycott the segregation laws and attend Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Governor Faubus had US troops escort these students out.	<b>1954 - 1968</b> <b>Civil Rights Movement</b> A movement started to fight the freedom of African-Americans from being segregated.	<b>August 28, 1963</b> <b>Martin L. King's "I Have a Dream"</b> Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech at the end of the March on Washington was broadcast around the world. It is a defining moment of the civil rights movement and is considered the one of the most iconic speeches in the U.S. history.	<b>July 2, 1964</b> <b>Civil Rights Act of 1964</b> President Johnson signed a law that prohibited discrimination in public places, provided for the integration of schools and other public facilities and made employment discrimination illegal.
<b>August 6, 1965</b> <b>Voting Rights Act of 1965</b> This act outlawed the discriminatory voting practices adopted in many southern states after the Civil War.	<b>May 2020</b> <b>Peak of Black Lives Matter Movement</b> George Floyd was brutally murdered by Derek Chauvin. This murder was video taped and put out on social media, which shed light to the various black lives lost due to police brutality and racism and made into a movement.	<b>2021</b> <b>Juneteenth Becomes a Holiday</b> Joe Biden signed a bill officially making Juneteenth a national holiday for activism, education, and a celebration of freedom.	

Juneteenth celebrates more than the end of slavery. It recognizes years of black Americans' struggle for freedom, equality and justice, even in our current time.

## Pack it up, Paxton

Ken Paxton ousted from office of Attorney General; impeachment trial to begin on Sept. 5

ANDRÉ AVERION  
Mercury Staff

Paxton is observed as a controversial figure for his engagements with anti-abortion law, supporting several anti-immigration bills including the "Muslim ban" anti-climate change provisions and playing a role in inciting the 2021 capital riot, according to news outlets such as AP News and the Texas Tribune. However, he found considerable favor with his home of Collin County for defending Texas against federal overreach, his decades of local political support for the county and advocacy for both education and improved transportation. His bipartisan impeachment has caused several investigations into the Texas GOP for others who are accused of corruption, causing debate as the legislative season ends.



KEN PAXTON

20 articles of impeachment have been filed against Paxton for allegations including bribery through a political donor, obstruction of justice regarding his own, false financial statements and misuse of public funds, misconduct against the State Bar, retaliating against the Whistleblower Act and abuse of office. Paxton has been suspended without pay as a result.

In response, nearly a hundred protestors stood outside the Collin County Courthouse on May 29 to protest the third impeachment in Texas history, with his supporters claiming it's "political persecution" according to inter-

SEE **PAXTON**, PAGE 9

## Students develop AI-powered chat bot to aid ECS students

Chatbot can answer questions related to class requirements, acting like a virtual advisor

SHRIYA VYASAM  
Mercury Staff

A group of UTD students created an AI chatbot that can act as a virtual advisor, answering questions related to the School of Engineering & Computer Science.

ITS junior Nehanth Narendrula, computer science sophomore Yesnas Nath and computer science junior Hamza Zulquernain created the ECS chatbot as part of their pledge project for Kappa Theta Pi, UTD's first professional co-ed technology fraternity on campus.

"The main thing we do at KTP is make people prepared for real life scenarios and teaching them skills that they can use for their own personal projects," Zulquernain said. "Something that we strive to do is give people projects, so that way they can really harness those technologies and make the most out of it."

With the ECS student-to-advisor ratio being 566:1, answering students' questions quickly can prove difficult for advisors. A fair chunk of answers about ECS topics can be found on the internet after

a deep dive into various UTD webpages. So, to make it easier for students, the developers compiled all website data that's already available on the internet to train their chatbot to answer potential ECS advising questions. The idea was inspired by Stanford's Large Language Model, or LLM, known as Alpaca.

"Stanford created their own LLM called Alpaca and it pretty much does the same thing," Narendrula said. "They also used LLaMA for theirs, and we kind of got that idea from them and researched more into it to adapt to our purposes."

Nath described the process of creating the chatbot, which included searching for all the materials that would provide useful information for students, much of which was data from UTD's website. The group ended up compiling almost 90 pages worth of data to train the chatbot, and they used the coding language Python to create the project.

"So we started off watching videos ... and finally we ended up on this tool called LLaMA," Nath said. "It's Meta's kind of large language model and a large language model is nothing but a bunch



UTD | COURTESY

manities and technology," UTD president Richard Benson said. "They approached UTD some months back to express interest in what we're doing in two arenas. One is the creation of a new arts and performance complex, or the Athenaeum... And then also the founding of this new school, which was formed by the way of merger between arts and humanities and the old arts, technology and emerging communication, or AHT."

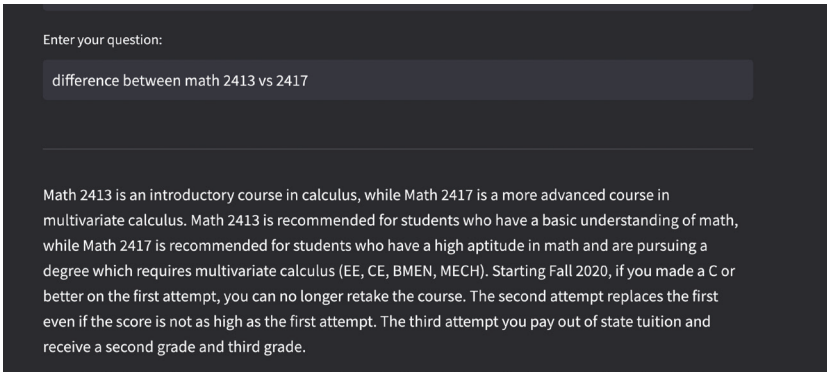
In his inauguration speech, Benson said he hoped to add an A in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering,

SEE **BASS**, PAGE 9



PARTH GHUMARE | MERCURY STAFF

The students work together to create a chatbot to assist engineering and computer science students and advisors.



NEHANTH NARENDRULA | COURTESY

of data that you've consolidated into one place."

From there they began the fine-tuning process which was testing what kind of responses they would get when they enter certain inputs using OpenAI.

"It was costing us almost a dollar to

run a single question every single time. We were able to get that down to where it was like 30 cents to run and a couple cents for each question," Zulquernain said. "The questions can add up really

SEE **CHATBOT**, PAGE 9

## Diversity bans become reality

Abbott approves bill eliminating Texas DEI offices

SHRIYA VYASAM  
Mercury Staff

Governor Gregg Abbott signed Senate Bill 17 into law on June 17, which requires all diversity, equity and inclusion offices in Texas public universities to be dismantled by Jan. 1, 2024.

SB 17 prohibits state-funded universities from maintaining DEI offices and programs, thus restricting how universities cultivate diversity, equitable access to education, and inclusion on their campuses. Senator Brandon Creighton, R-Conroe, said he proposed SB 17 to the legislature this March so colleges and universities could focus on education and innovation without DEI distraction. The bill was under close scrutiny from Democrats, who believe that the legislation prioritizes political agenda over student success and that DEI initiatives are meant to enhance academic quality for more students, not hinder them.

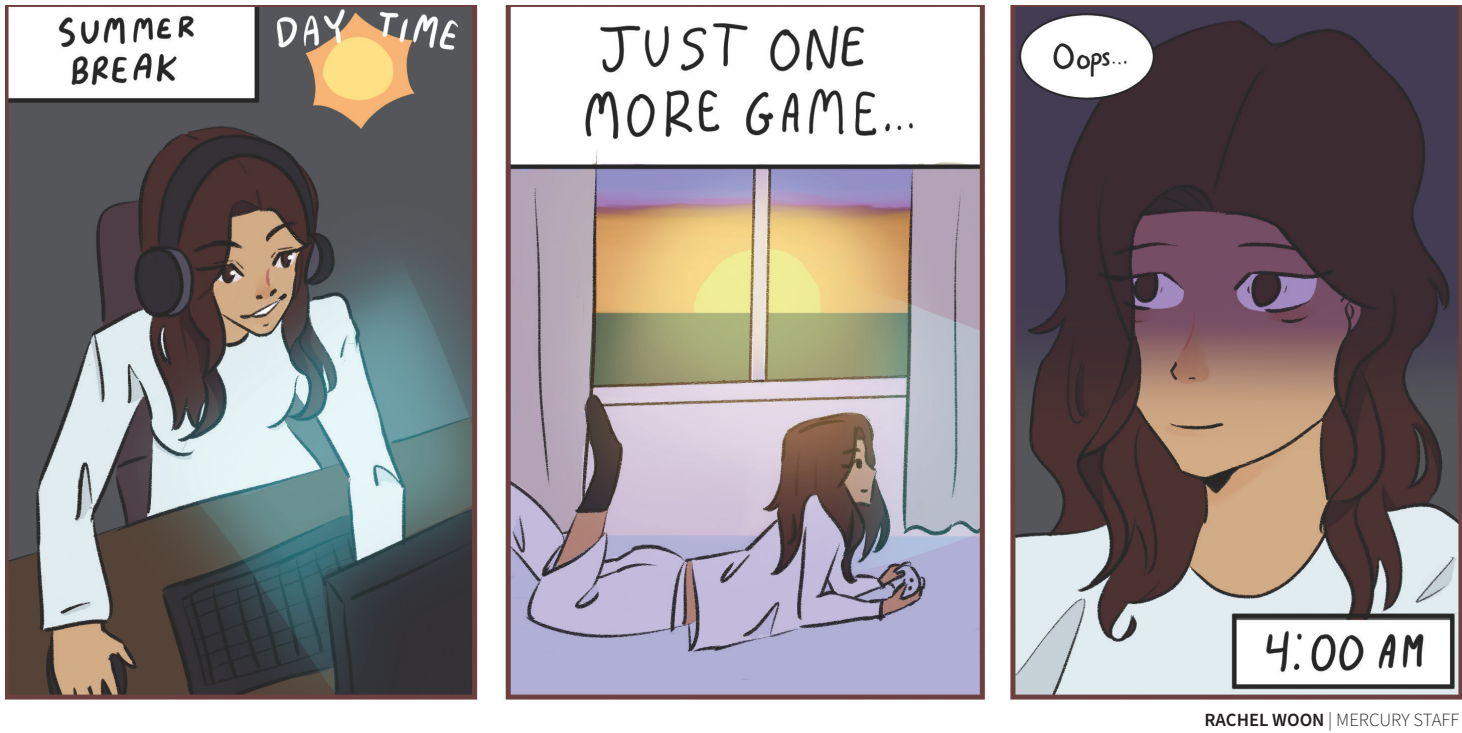
Brooke Everett, assistant vice president of student affairs DEI initiatives, said UTD is one of the most diverse campuses in Texas in terms of race, religion, sexuality, and other demographics, and thus will be heavily impacted by the law. The loss of ODEI will affect students who rely on the office for support and resources, and the campus population generally who benefit from equitable education and a culture of inclusion. Everett said she believes that the bill misdefines what DEI really means.

"It outlines some things regarding public institutions of higher education and what they can and cannot do as it relates to diversity, equity and inclusion," Everett said. "The bill is very specific in terms of what they consider DEI work or DEI offices, and how [the lawmakers] define it is not neces-

SEE **DEI**, PAGE 9



JUST ONE MORE GAME



6.23 Sudoku

			9					
7	6	8			5		2	
2								8
8				2				
	1	9			6			4
		5				3		
			3					1
						5		
	5					6		

Household reproductions X-word

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
17				18							19			
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47	48	49						50						
51							52					53	54	55
56						57	58				59			
60						61					62			
63						64					65			

ALANA PLATT | STUDENT CONTRIBUTOR

Across

- 1 Prohibits  
5 Like this puzzle per-  
haps  
10 It's a long story  
14 r/wallstreetbets  
users  
15 Like ghosts or mis-  
spelled canals  
16 Israel's Barak  
17 Hitting from behind  
19 \_\_\_\_ dire: court oath  
20 Orch. section  
21 Mother \_\_\_\_  
22 Name that appar-  
ently does NOT belong  
to a funky little  
video game character  
in a green hat like I  
thought it did  
23 \*Hole for poking  
one's head through  
27 Trying to lose?  
29 Go on and on and  
on and on and on  
30 Untrue  
31 \*Where a child  
might hide  
35 Actress Longoria  
36 Ting of at home  
workouts  
38 Monk's title  
39 \*One might be  
needed for a horizontal  
tango  
42 Occupied, as a desk  
44 Per

- 45 Suitability  
47 \*Stiff boards one  
might sit on  
51 Affaire de coeur  
52 Algerian port  
53 Short smoke?  
56 One who is whipped  
57 Choose words that  
start the same  
60 Med school subj.  
61 Painting on dry  
plaster  
62 French weapon  
63 Toddler's taboo  
64 Notions  
65 Timid

Down

- 1 Rap song feature  
2 A dog, for one  
3 Grave, as injuries  
4 Ukr. or Lith., once  
5 Well used by Mayans  
6 Website with 14a  
7 The Little Mermaid  
8 Sloth, e.g.  
9 Line part: Abbr.  
10 Trial by jury amend-  
ment  
11 "Get \_\_\_\_ of your-  
self!"  
12 Italian-American  
man, offensively  
13 Art contest result?  
18 Spanish for "the  
river"  
22 Metal in pennies

- 24 Impotence and an-  
orexia, e.g.  
25 Therefore  
26 Hourly pay  
27 Spoiler of a perfect  
28 \_\_\_\_ Scotia  
31 Shade tree  
32 Sometimes needed  
after 17a  
33 401(k) alternatives  
34 Misunderstood ro-  
dents  
36 Fashion Chanel  
37 Jolly laugh  
40 Set the stage for  
41 "\_\_\_\_ XD" (emo  
speak)  
42 What I will be  
throwing as the only  
one free from 8d  
43 "I'll take that as  
\_\_\_\_"  
45 Where to go to go  
to Togo  
46 "\_\_\_\_ Republic"  
47 Comedian Minhaj  
48 \_\_\_\_ acid  
49 Holy \_\_\_\_ Empire  
50 Sweet in Spanish  
54 Slangy response to  
a relatable tweet  
55 One who might play  
22a  
57 "\_\_\_\_ was saying..."  
58 Lit the way  
59 Slam into

Across

- 1 Tennis great Arthur  
5 Carry  
9 Harpoon  
12 Fired a gun  
13 Change for a five  
14 Oklahoma city  
16 Gentle  
17 1961 Haley Mills  
family flick  
20 Get older  
21 Washer cycle  
22 Tristan's love  
23 Following  
25 Gender (Abbr.)  
26 Japanese coin  
27 Aviator  
28 Coffee order  
30 Kind of prize  
31 1985 Eastwood epic  
35 Surrealist Max  
37 Skater Midori  
38 Itsy-bitsy  
39 1992 Charles Gro-  
din doggie flick  
41 Preserve  
42 Sp. Mr.  
43 Big name in oil  
45 Nile viper  
48 Wager  
49 Vaughan of jazz  
50 French composer

- 52 Sharpen  
53 Marry  
56 1992 Anthony Hop-  
kins film  
58 Loathsome  
59 Make one's way  
through a crowd  
60 Asian nurse  
61 Emerald \_\_\_\_  
62 Thing, in law  
63 Persian spirit  
64 Attention-getter

Down

- 1 The Thin Man dog  
2 Carpet type  
3 1990 Macaulay  
Culkin silliness  
4 Season, in France  
5 1937 Cary Grant  
comedy  
6 Walking \_\_\_\_  
7 Sea swallow  
8 Compass pt.  
9 2008 Steve Carell  
movie remake of  
TV series  
10 Division word  
11 Young females  
15 Florida's Miami-\_\_\_\_  
County  
18 Bridget Fonda, to

- Jane  
19 Corral  
21 \_\_\_\_-Foy, Que.  
24 Beginnings  
25 Crook  
27 Duffer's cry  
28 Office stamp  
29 Big party  
30 Cotillion girl  
31 Turning point  
32 1974 Bronson flick  
that started a series  
33 Jealousy  
34 Bread type  
36 1963 Hitchcock  
classic starring Tippi  
Hedren  
40 Nonstop (2 wds.)  
43 1982 Ben Kingsley  
epic  
44 Bard's "before"  
45 "\_\_\_\_ du lieber!"  
46 Vegas attraction  
47 Might  
49 Navigational aid  
51 French door part  
52 Blood pigment  
54 Fashion magazine  
55 View as  
57 Dupe  
58 By means of

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11		
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	27						28				29			
30						31					32	33	34	
35				36		37				38				
39					40						41			
			42					43	44					
45	46	47		48				49						
50			51				52					53	54	55
56						57					58			
	59					60					61			
		62				63					64			

5.1 Sudoku key

4	2	9	8	5	7	6	3	1
7	1	3	4	2	6	9	5	8
5	8	6	9	3	1	4	2	7
9	3	5	7	8	4	2	1	6
6	7	2	3	1	9	5	8	4
1	4	8	2	6	5	7	9	3
3	6	7	5	9	8	1	4	2
2	9	4	1	7	3	8	6	5
8	5	1	6	4	2	3	7	9

5.1 Rebus key

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13			
D	O	S	T		S	K	I	N		R	O	C	K	S	
14	O	R	N	O		I	N	D	O		O	N	P	O	T
17	H	E	A	T		G	O	I	T		B	O	S	S	Y
20	A	C	C	O	U	N	T	E	D		F	O	R		
23	R	A	K	E	R	S		O	A	T		O	D	E	
28	M	R	S		D	U	M	B		U	I	G	H	U	R
31	S	U	P	E	R	E	X	C	I	T	E	D			
36	E	S	T	A		L	I	D				L	O	S	E
41	M	A	N	U	F	A	C	T	U	R	E	D			
46	U	N	T	R	O	D		A	C	E	D		B	A	R
51	S	O	S		R	A	S				R	E	S	A	L
56	C	O	M	P	U	T	E	R	I	Z	E	D			
59	E	L	T	O	N		A	S	O	N		M	A	G	S
64	T	E	M	O	C		T	A	R	T		B	A	R	E
67	A	G	I	L	E		S	A	N	S		A	R	E	A

4.17 Sudoku key

7	9	6	5	1	3	8	4	2
2	5	1	6	8	4	7	3	9
3	8	4	9	2	7	1	6	5
8	2	3	1	7	6	5	9	4
9	1	5	3	4	2	6	7	8
6	4	7	8	9	5	3	2	1
1	6	8	2	3	9	4	5	7
5	7	2	4	6	8	9	1	3
4	3	9	7	5	1	2	8	6

4.17 X-word key

S	O	L	V	E		F	R	O	S	T		C	R	Y	
O	R	I	E	L		E	A	R	E	D		H	I	E	
B	E	A	R	M		A	R	K	E	T	S		I	S	M
	O	R	B		T	R	E	A	T			C	H	E	
			S	L	O	E		D	O	E	S	K	I	N	
L	A	D		A	L	T				B	E	E			
E	G	O		S	L	O	S	H		B	A	N	D	S	
T	U	G	S			U	S	O			R	O	I	L	
S	E	M	I	S		T	E	R	R	A		U	R	I	
	A	T	E					S	I	P		T	E	T	
C	A	T	S	C	A	N		E	N	O	S				
A	L	I			C	U	S	P	S		T	E	S		
D	I	S			T	U	R	T	L	E	N	E	C	K	S
R	A	T			A	T	S	E	A		A	E	R	I	E
E	S	S			T	E	E	N	Y		P	L	U	M	E

Notice: The 4.17 sudoku and x-word solutions printed in the 5.1 orientation issue were those of an earlier issue. These are the correct solutions to the 4.17 sudoku and x-word puzzles.



# FROM WEBS TO WORLDS

## "ACROSS THE SPIDERVERSE" SPINS A MULTIDIMENSIONAL MASTERPIECE

**UNAIZA KHAKOO**  
Mercury Staff

"Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse" delivered a visually stunning, musically intriguing film that left audiences begging for more screentime with beloved characters, both old and new.

While "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse" followed Miles Morales and his early journey into taking on the role of a superhero, the heavily anticipated sequel looks deeper into the personal relationships he has developed during the time between the two movies. From conflicts with his parents to a special visit from Gwen Stacy, the movie allows the audience have more of an insight into who Miles truly is. The dive into Miles' personal life coupled with his adventures throughout the multiverse with Gwen make for an adventure-packed film with surprises and hidden gems at every twist and turn.

The movie begins with a glimpse into Gwen's life after the loss of her best friend. She struggles to come to terms with the past while keeping her Spider-Woman identity hidden from her police captain father who is out to solve the murder of Peter Parker. As she takes on another villain, Gwen encounters Miguel O'Hara and Jess Drew, who invite her to join a secret society of interdimensional Spider-people who work together to keep their respective homes safe from evil.

When the audience last saw Miles, he was embracing the responsibilities of his new-found superhero status and returning to his dimension after his time with Gwen. When we meet him again during "Across the Spider-Verse," he is in his junior year of high school and attempting to balance grades and saving his city. Miles' newfound comfort in his role as Spider-Man is fun to watch as a viewer because you see the evolution and growth from his unfamiliarity in the first film.

Miles and Gwen reunite, only to realize a new villain called the Spot is out wreaking havoc again. As a result, the duo is thrust into a high-stakes chase of the Spot throughout different Earths where they encounter new Spider-Men such as Pavitr Prabhakar, Spider-Man India, and Hobie Brown, Spider-Punk, and the film begins to pick up the pace. The interactions between all the characters made for a comedic, well-rounded group that had the au-

dience audibly reacting to various scenes. Additionally, seeing a diverse cast of Spider

most memorable scenes in the film.

As the gang tries to uncover what's going on with the Spot, the movie brings

is their ability to foreshadow and reference previous films. This movie delivered on that front, making it an extra engaging watch for big fans like myself as we

high-quality art that the animators created came through in the final product. Each Earth was unique and artistically distinct in style. Highlights included Gwen's Earth, Earth-65, which had a color scheme reflective of her emotions, and Pavitr's Earth, Earth-50101, which had an India-America combined aesthetic with the city of Mumbattan. My personal favorite universe was the Lego Earth which was animated by a 14-year old YouTuber. However, the best part of the animation was Hobie Brown's character design. His eye-catching punk rock aesthetic used experimental animation technology to create a breathtaking visual that stood out among the already gorgeous film. Combined with his humor and carefree attitude, Hobie was a stand-out in every scene he was in.

Another spectacular aspect of the film was the soundtrack. Produced by Metro Boomin, the album featured some of the most popular artists of our time such as Future and 21 Savage. Swae Lee made a reappearance in the Spider-Verse after his popular 2018 track "Sunflower" with Post Malone. This time, he returned with Lil Wayne and Offset for the opening track titled "Annihilate." The best part about the music of the film was how well it kept up with the high-energy vibes of the movie. Every song on the album fits into the scene it is assigned to like a custom glove, enrapturing the audience into the overall experience of the movie. The soundtrack alone makes the film a must watch for how well-incorporated it was. My favorite track on the album was "Am I Dreaming" by Metro Boomin, A\$AP Rocky and Roisee because it felt like being transported into the brightly colored, dreamlike worlds that were shown throughout the movie.

Despite being over two hours long, "Spiderman: Across the Spider-Verse" makes you feel as if no time has passed while watching it. In fact, it leaves the audience desperate to continue with the story line that they established throughout those two hours. The movie was the satisfying sequel that fans had been waiting for, and I look forward to seeing what comes next for Miles and his story.



characters that mesh well into the storyline was a wonderful highlight throughout the movie. Each character had a unique, original personality that came together with the rest of the group to create some of the

more depth to Miles' character and his specific circumstances as Spider-Man, allowing for the audience to slowly put together the pieces of his puzzle. One of the things I admire most about Marvel films

searched for the details throughout the film.

The first Spider-Verse movie was applauded for its beautiful animation and the sequel did not disappoint. The attention to detail and dedication to

## "The Little Mermaid" swims to cinematic success

Despite controversy surrounding Ariel's race, the movie flips skeptics on their backs, delivers dazzling musical score and alluring underwater visuals

**UMAMA SURIYA**  
Mercury Staff

Combining beautiful cinematography, stunning singing, and a colorful cast of characters, Disney's live action "The Little Mermaid" far exceeds expectations and will enchant even the sternest of skeptics.

The discourse surrounding the release of the "The Little Mermaid" in May 2023 had taken social media by storm for months prior. Some groups expressed disapproval of Ariel's race in the live-action, feeling that she should have been a white character like in the original 1989 version. However, after watching the movie, it's clear that making Ariel a black character is a minuscule but positive change in the original storyline that is bringing diversity into Disney's works. Disney has been including more diverse characters recently, such as Moana in the movie "Moana" and Joe in the Disney Pixar movie "Soul" — it's an appreciated change of pace that is important for people of color because of how rarely they see themselves represented on the movie screens.

Because of all the discourse surrounding the movie, my thoughts while watching the movie were plagued with race in mind. I was excitedly overwhelmed with how much diversity was shown in the movie, as the movie showed all seven daughters of the sea as a different race. This small detail could

make many kids of color feel special since they are so underrepresented on TV. Representation and inclusivity are important for all kinds of individuals to feel that they are seen by others.

Cinematographically, this movie was absolutely beautiful. The shots filmed underwater showed the beauty of the ocean, and the attention to detail in the underwater scenes was thoroughly done. Although Ariel's mermaid outfit could have been a little more detailed, her human outfits made up for it by looking flawless.

When it comes to the differences with the original animated version in 1989, this remake had some distinct changes. Despite the obvious being the inclusion of different races through Ariel and her other sisters, the sisters' backstories were completely erased. In the original, there is a song that essentially lets the sisters talk. In the remake, it seems as if the sisters are only there to show viewers that Ariel has siblings instead of being separate, important characters. This makes me wonder if Disney has future movie plans to dive into these sisters' backstories and personalities because I truly want to see who they are and I'm sure other fans of this movie would appreciate that as well.

Another change that I noticed is that Ariel was the one that killed Ursula in the end. However, in the original, Prince Eric is the one that leads to impaling Ursula. This remake having Ariel

impale Ursula gives it a twist and portrays Ariel as a strong female character. It's also incredible to see a princess defeat her villain in a movie since we usually see a "knight in shining armor" or a prince that saves the princesses. There are surely more plot differences, but this is the biggest one that stood out to me.

Some of the songs are also different in the remake from the original, and this change made the movie stand out in the way it did. Halle Bailey's stunning voice in the song "Part of Your World" gave me goosebumps in the movie theatre, and is even better than the original version.

Halle Bailey did an incredible job playing Ariel — she was the perfect person for the role. Her voice is stunning, angelic, and heavenly. Melissa McCarthy's performance as Ursula is runner-up for my favorite in the movie, with her character's subtle comedy making all her scenes memorable. Despite being known for her comedic roles, McCarthy played the villain's role flawlessly. Jonah Hauer-King also played Prince Eric's role perfectly as well and really brought a lot of charm and compassion to Eric's character.

Despite the drama this movie caused, "The Little Mermaid" seems to be doing extremely well, grossing \$413 million to date. I give this movie a nine out of ten and recommend it to anyone that wants to see an old Disney fairytale include diversity extremely well.



WALT DISNEY STUDIOS | COURTESY

A remake of the classic 1989 Disney animation, "The Little Mermaid" combines graphic effects with live actors to transport you to a whole new world.



# UTD dominates American Southwestern Conference with five championships

Women's basketball, women's tennis, both golf teams and volleyball brought home the most titles of all schools in ASC this season

## ANDRÉ AVERION

UTD concluded the 2022-23 athletic season with five American Southwestern Conference championship titles — the most won titles out of all Division III schools in the conference.

The Comets saw major victories in men's and women's golf, volleyball, women's basketball and women's tennis. Seven of UTD's sports teams attended the ASC Championship Tournaments this season — a feat that

has only been accomplished two times in the program's history. Additionally, the Athletic Department added 197 new entries to the program and individual records book. Cody Usher, assistant athletic director for media relations, believes that this season saw an endearing development in the departments' competitiveness which will continue with the efforts of new coaches.

"We've won at least one championship title each year since 2012," Usher said. "One

of the amazing things is that for four out of five titles that we won were by first-year head coaches in the first year here at UT Dallas."

Men's and women's golf teams not only dominated the ASC season, but saw high individual achievements with three UTD players being placed in the top 25 for best Division III players nationally.

Placing first place in six out of 10 tour-

SEE **CHAMPIONS** PAGE 10



UTD ATHLETICS | COURTESY



# Outdoor calisthenics court established on campus; free and first of its kind in Texas

## ANDRÉ AVERION

Mercury Staff

The UTD Fitness Court Studio is the first Fitness Court Studio to arrive in Texas as a part of an initiative by the National Fitness Campaign to improve health throughout the nation.

Introduced on May 4, the double-sided outdoor calisthenics gym is UREC's newest amenity, free of charge to Comets looking for a quick body resistance workout. The court is located southwest of the Recreational Center, alongside the volleyball courts and soccer fields in a space that has been conceptualized for outdoor usage for years. The idea for a fitness court came from Rafael Martín, vice president and chief of staff, who first mentioned the initiative in the summer of 2022.

Tricia Losavio, director of UTD UREC, said that she chose the court's location by the soccer field for its visual prominence and accessibility that wouldn't clash with other developments around campus.

"It fit naturally in that space, like an outdoor UREC space all in one spot," Losavio said. "I think students — once

everyone returns in the fall semester — will be excited."

The UTD Fitness Court is a part of the National Fitness Campaign network that began in 1979, starting with wooden and metal courts that reached 10,000 locations across three countries. Today, the courts utilize heat-resistant plastic and concrete studios which are more resistant to the elements. There are currently four Fitness Courts — one-sided outdoor calisthenics gyms — in the DFW Metroplex, with four more courts expected to arrive soon. UTD's dual-sided court is the only one in Texas so far; the back side is an empty studio space that can be used for yoga or outdoor classes, while the front houses equipment needed for resistance training and exercise stations with easy-to-follow instructions. Mike Cole, director of partnership development for the National Fitness Campaign said it wasn't a hard decision to begin the growing fitness movement at UTD.

"How we ended up contacting UT Dallas was by sort of casting that broad net, but also by understanding



ALL PHOTOS BY: VEDANT SAPRA | PHOTO EDITOR

**A UTD student utilizes the pull-up and suspending pushup stations at the outdoor calisthenics studio. The side of the court provides visual instructions for how to perform easy to high level intensity body weight exercises such as air squats and side lunges, and resistance exercises such as standing rows and reverse hyper extensions.**

where there are ... forward-thinking, health-minded, and activity-minded leadership," Cole said.

The UT Dallas Fitness Court Studio maintains two courts, one containing seven stations each made to last a minute long, and the other remaining as empty space for UREC's planned outdoor yoga programs and outdoor fitness classes that will arrive in the fall semester. Instructions for the seven stations can be viewed on

the court wall to help students develop the benefits of muscular and aerobic conditioning. Each station comes in the form of three levels with increasing difficulty, and through The Fitness Court app, nearly a thousand variations of exercise developed by national athletes can be explored.

UREC said they understand Comets might be worried about the Texas heat. Currently a shade design is being developed and is expected to be implemented

in September. Until then, UREC recommends bringing a towel and cool water when working out.

"If you've never worked out before, you can walk out there, scan the QR code, pull up their website, design a workout for that day or week, and then it can keep track of your progress," Losavio said. "I think [students] should try it."

For more information on how to utilize each station and an instructional exercise video, please visit [utdmercury.com](http://utdmercury.com).



# From pawns to kings: highlights from the spring 2023 chess season

## AAFIYA ASLAM

Mercury Staff

The spring 2023 chess season came to a remarkable end with several moments of brilliance in state tournaments throughout the semester.

From the beginning of the year, the UTD Chess Team participated in a series of tournaments, including the Pan-American Intercollegiate, Chess Fest 2023, Southwest Collegiate Team Championship, Texas Woman's State Championship and the Spring 2023 Chess Intramurals. Despite a somewhat

shaky start, the team turned this season into a remarkable one.

The Pan-American Intercollegiate tournament, held annually in January, decides on four teams to advance to the final College Chess Championship. Although the UTD Chess team did not manage to secure a spot in the top four, coach Julio Sadorra believes that it is a promising start for UTD's newest players.

"This year we had some new players that joined the team that will be here for a while, so you know it takes time for things to glue

together," Sadorra said.

The 2023 Southwest Collegiate Team Championship is a competition in which teams from the southwest region of the U.S. compete to determine the top three teams that will qualify for the Texas Collegiate Super Finals in the fall of 2023. The UTD Chess Team was split into two teams with three players each: Team A and Team B. Both teams made a remarkable comeback; Team A advanced to the finals with a perfect score from its grandmasters, and Team B tied for fourth place.

"Team B was very supportive because to win the tournament they stopped some teams," Julio said. "For example, Texas Tech — they beat them. It's kind of a team effort because one team is slowing down or drawing the other teams while Team A is going and going."

The Texas Women's State Championship in Brownsville, Texas saw International Master Gergana Peycheva emerge as the Texas Women's Champion and her teammate, IM

SEE **CHESS** PAGE 10



**Julio Sadorra coaches UTD Chess Team. His world chess rank is 353.**





VEDANT SAPRA  
Mercury Staff

Spring brings along an assortment of flowers to Texas. UTD is blessed with a great diversity of flora — you can come across blooming plants all over campus. The most iconic campus flowers are the blossoming magnolia trees along the pavement starting at the Student Memorial Fountain and extending all the way south to the University Roundabout. During the end of spring and the beginning of summer, the blooming magnolia flowers give fragrance to students walking between the trees to class.



The abundance of flowers fosters a vibrant ecosystem teeming with arthropods which can be seen delighting in the blossoms. Occasional rains during this time also offer an opportunity for mushrooms and other kinds of fungi to prosper.

During this time, most birds in the region are nesting and bringing up younglings in the rich ecosystem of the warmer months.



ALL PHOTOS BY: VEDANT SAPRA | MERCURY STAFF

# Powerful page-turners provide perspective into Pride and POC

UNAIZA KHAKOO  
Mercury Staff

June marks an important month in the year as it encompasses Pride Month and Juneteenth -- both important events that celebrate freedom in different forms. As you celebrate and observe, here are some book recommendations to learn more about the experiences of the LGBTQ+ community and Black Americans.

“**The Stonewall Reader**,” edited by the New York Public Library, is a nonfiction anthology that pulls first-hand accounts, diaries, articles, and other periodic media from the Stonewall Riots from the library’s collection. Released in 2019 on the 50th anniversary of the riots, the book is a wonderful way to get a historical perspective on LGBTQ+ movements and understand the riots’ political and social significance. If reading nonfiction is not up your alley, consider listening to the audiobook version

where listeners get to experience some of their interviews from their original recordings. The extensive collection will not only give you a perspective of queerness in the past, but it will help you contextualize it in the current political climate.

If you prefer fiction, “**Detransition, Baby**” by Torrey Peters is a deeply moving novel about women — transgender and cisgender alike — navigating adulthood as they tackle an unexpected pregnancy that causes them to confront their ideas of motherhood, gender, and sex in a unique way. The novel is a groundbreaking example of transgender representation because it not only prominently features transgender characters, but it allows them to experience and navigate issues outside of their identity as well. Torrey tackles difficult topics, making the book controversial. However, with an average of 4 out of 5 stars on Goodreads, it has clearly captured an audi-

ence because of the daring questions that it is willing to ask and is one of the first novels by a transgender author released by a major publishing house.

Do you prefer older literature? “**Giovanni’s Room**” by James Baldwin may be more to your liking. Written in 1956, the fictional novel centers around a young American man living in Paris as he deals with his feelings and frustrations about his relationships with men. Heartbreaking and deeply genuine, the novel was monumental for representation at the time and continues to be applauded for its storytelling. Baldwin created relatable, real characters that seemingly come out of the page to share their story with the world. If you were to only read one of the three queer books on this list, I would recommend this one.

Another important holiday during

SEE **BOOKS**, PAGE 10



RACHEL WOON | MERCURY STAFF



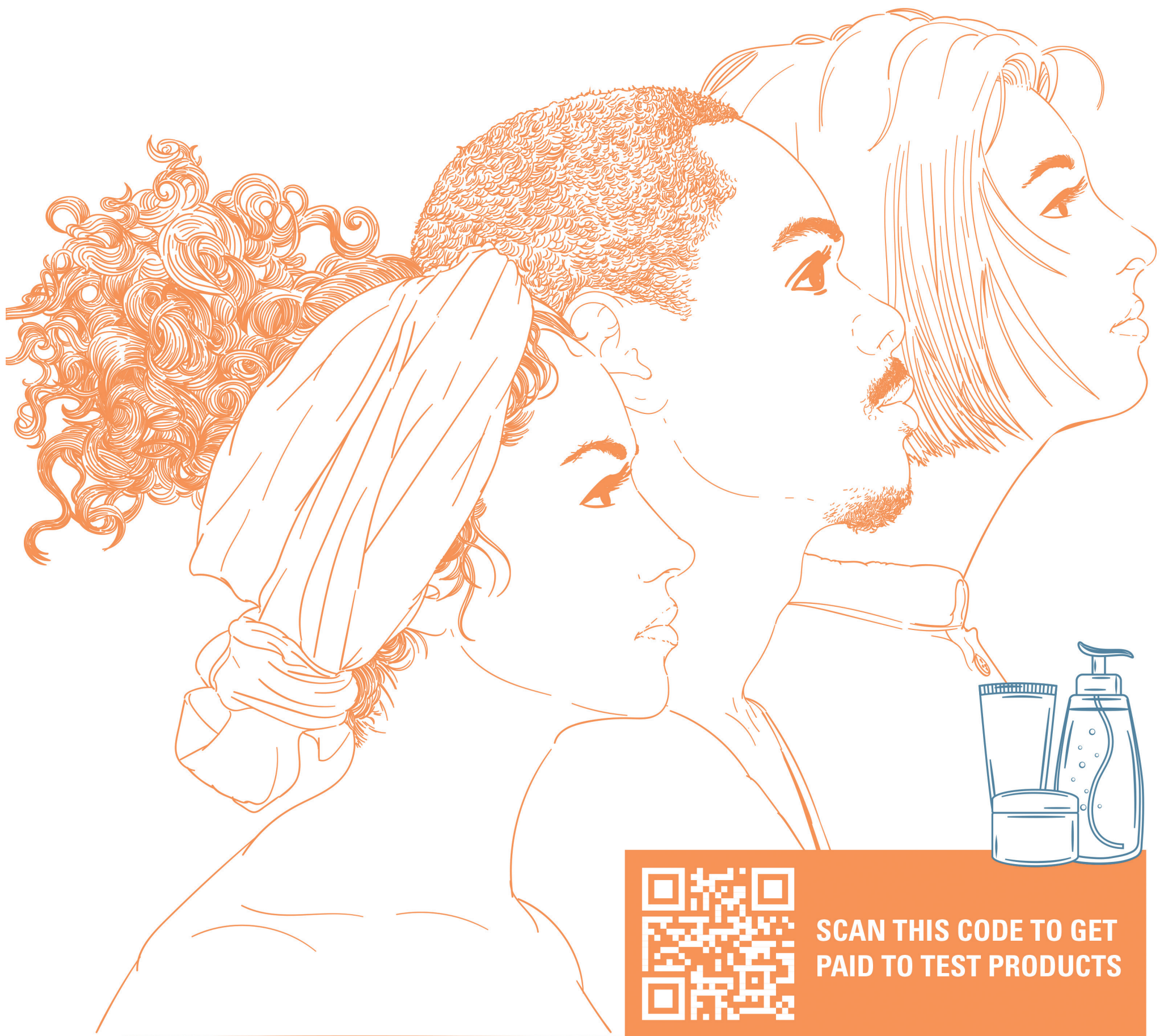
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# LEGISLATIVE RECAP: WHAT'S COMING FOR UTD

The biggest bills include a ban on DEI, transgender athletes and fentanyl protections

ANDRÉ AVERION  
Mercury Staff

The Texas legislative season ended on May 29, with Governor Greg Abbott signing several higher education bills into law that could impact UTD's future.

Amongst the hundreds of bills approved this session include a ban on programs of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, tenure protection policies, UT System changes, bills affecting the transgender community, increased fentanyl penalties, stricter anti-hazing laws and construction interference.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion offices are to be dismantled from campuses by January 2024 under Senate Bill 17. It's unknown how exactly the law will affect various departments within the campus. Brooke Everett, assistant vice president of student affairs, said UTD will still do its best to ensure an equitable education and campus.

"We at the University of Texas at Dallas are administrators ... [that] are committed to still ensuring a safe campus. A campus that is welcoming for all faculty, staff and students," Everett said. "Here in the division of Student Affairs, our tagline is that you belong here and we are not looking to change that anytime soon. So, we are still committed to that. It's just a matter of how we can continue to live that out within this new legislation."

Professor tenure will continue in Texas, but Senate Bill 18 revokes the power for individual university system boards to make tenure policy changes in favor of the state board dictating

future alterations and definitions, effectively giving them power to intervene in decisions of continued employment. The law will be enforced Sept. 1. The law replaces rigorous individual guidelines for what critics are describing as universally vague and potentially dangerous, however, UTD already practices a majority of these procedures. Stephen Spiro, associate provost of auxiliary services, expresses how the uncertainty of the current political climate could have been worse.

"The extent at which this impacts our future hirings, I think remains to be seen," Spiro said. "I feel reasonably confident actually that the impact will not be so severe because I think we can reassure applicants for our position that the law really is just codifying things we were already doing."

Titled the "Save Women's Sports Act," Senate Bill 15 will require student athletes to compete in intercollegiate sports teams that align with their sex assigned at birth. The NCAA already has policies permitting women can only compete if they are below a certain testosterone level, however, this puts into effect that student athletes cannot compete generally or in the ASC going forward unless they are on their assigned team. UTD does not currently have any transgender student athletes, however, any future student athletes will be banned from being able to compete on a team they identify with. The bill also dictates that public universities violating this law will be heavily fined.

These bills have generated controversy and may potentially impact

faculty recruitment. Spiro suggests that, according to anecdotal data, such concerns have been consistently related to whether hires join UTD for the last two to three years. While it's too early to say what impact this year's legislation will have, it does narrow the pool of applicants interested in joining UTD if certain policies are or aren't supported by law.

"There are concerns about other things that are part of the political landscape," Spiro said. "In addition to tenure, reproductive rights, of course, is one of them — and I know that has had impacts on faculty recruitment. Healthcare in general, gun safety, and I think the other one that's now on the books and is significant to UT Dallas is SB 17."

Taking effect Sept. 1, public drag shows will be banned from being presented to individuals below the age of 18 according to Senate Bill 12. This means anyone who hosts a drag show where minors are presents could be fined \$10,000 and charged with a criminal offense. Meanwhile, the Texas Legislature also passed a bill specifically for UT Systems. Senate Bill 1055 states Stephen F. Austin State College will be admitted into the UT System, which could see system program collaborations in educational, health care and research needs.

Texas also passed Senate Bill 1517 which prohibits public universities from academically boycotting Israel and may allow students to study abroad if institutionally approved.

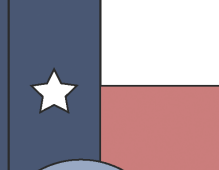

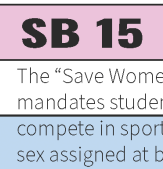

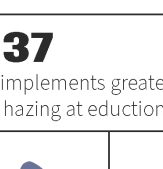
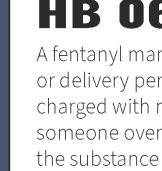
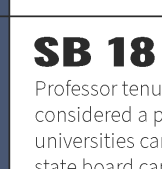
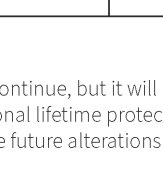
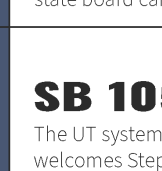

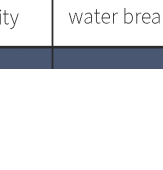
There are also several bills indirectly impacting UTD. In response to a

growing fentanyl crisis among adolescents and young adults in the DFW metroplex, Abbott has signed House Bill 6 into law declaring that fentanyl dealers tied with overdoses will receive the equivalent of a murder charge in court, effective Sept. 1, 2023. It's estimated that fentanyl is a factor in 53% of overdoses according to the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics, making it one of the most dangerous opioids in the world. The latest DFW task force news including a Fort Worth bust recovering 900,000 doses of fentanyl. With concerns that fentanyl is reaching public institutions, the law hopes to cease the growing death count, with Senate Bill 1319 allowing emergency response and detectives to construct overdose maps to start tracking dealers and hotspot locations.

This is accompanied by Senate Bill 37 which will continue to enforce and develop greater restrictions and consequences towards college hazing.

While UTD is not known for its hazing or fentanyl, it is known for its constant construction and development, as humorously portrayed with Enarc. House Bill 2127, otherwise called the "Death Star Bill," strips local city authority in favor for statewide regulations for business, including construction efforts. Effective Sept. 1, 2023, it could remove mandatory water breaks from Dallas and Austin, which is being described as a death sentence for construction workers amongst excessive heatwaves.

The Mercury will continue to monitor the development of ODEI's removal from campus and other bills of

 <b>Bills passed in the 2023 Legislative Session that can affect UTD</b>	
 <b>SB 17</b> The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will be removed from public higher education institutions	 <b>SB 15</b> The "Save Women's Sports Act" mandates student-athletes to only compete in sport teams that align with their sex assigned at birth
	 <b>SB 14</b> This bill bans minors from transitioning on taxpayer money and prohibits mental health professionals from endorsing transitioning
	 <b>SB 1517</b> Public universities can't academically boycott certain countries, specifically Israel
 <b>SB 37</b> This bill implements greater restrictions and punishment towards hazing at educational institutions	
 <b>HB 06</b> A fentanyl manufacturer or delivery person can be charged with murder if someone overdoses from the substance	 <b>SB 1319</b> Emergency responders and detectives can construct overdosing maps to track hotspots and dealers
 <b>SB 18</b> Professor tenure will continue, but it will no longer be considered a professional lifetime protection. Individual universities can't make future alterations and only the state board can.	
 <b>SB 1055</b> The UT system welcomes Stephen F. Austin State University	 <b>HB 2127</b> The "Death Star Bill" restricts regulations for business, including construction. It could remove mandatory water breaks from Dallas to Austin.
RAINIER PEDERSON   MERCURY STAFF	



PAXTON  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

views with CBSTexas. The defense team for Paxton, which includes Tony Buzbee said that Paxton was not presented with his investigation or prepared with a defense prior to his impeachment.

"When I read the 20 articles of impeachment, my first thought was that these were worthless and weak," Buzbee said in a news conference on June 7.

Attorney interim John Scott will temporarily hold office while Texas' top lawyers, Dick DeGuerin and Rusty Hardin, will present the impeachment trial on Sept. 5.

"This is not about punishing Mr. Paxton, this is about protecting the public," DeGuerin said.

CHATBOT  
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quickly so we just had people enter their OpenAI key so they can basically just pay for whatever questions they want to ask."

The developers believe that this project helped them in their personal and professional growth. Working on the project allowed them to gain more ex-

BASS  
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Math and Management) and form STEAMM by making UTD acquire a significant presence in the arts. Following the acquisition of the Crow Museum of Asian Art, which will anchor visual arts, the performance hall is set to open in 2026 and it will expand UTD's performing arts department.

"It will forever change UTD in a way that's positive," Benson said. "And by the way, this is not a zero-sum game. In other words, we don't have to subtract from science, technology, engineering, math, and management in order to do this. It's also important that we are now going to be a major arts center in North Texas. When the DART line opens, which will be a little bit after our Athenaeum first opens up, that'll be a great one-two combination to bring people to campus. I'm really looking forward to it."

BAHT Dean Nils Roemer

perience in the emerging field of artificial intelligence, and therefore more opportunities through jobs and internships to participate in similar, or even greater, AI projects.

"I actually have to thank this project, because I recently did an interview and the whole company was about utilizing data with OpenAI," Nath said. "So, I literally used what I learned here and what I was able

to implement ... I learned a lot from it and I'm really thankful for it."

As of now, the chatbot is most useful for ECS students, but the developers hope to broaden its scope to the greater UTD population. You can access the chatbot using this link: <https://kt-putd-ecschatbot.streamlit.app/>

Visit [utdmercury.com](http://utdmercury.com) to learn more about the chatbot's capabilities.

DEI  
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sarily how it is defined in higher education."

UTD has multiple offices and departments that promote DEI initiatives and programming such as ODEI, Multicultural Center, Accessibility Resource Center and Galerstein Gender Center. There are also academic units within each school where staff members like assistant deans, vice presidents, etc. play a major role to advocate for DEI.

"It's not one person or one individual department trying to ensure that the university is a safe, welcoming space ... that's the job of everyone which involves multiple people, departments and units," Everett said. "So, in terms of how the bill impacts offices, it will impact multiple offices, individuals and jobs."

The new bill may also impact admission applications around Texas as it bars requiring diversity

statements. Although UTD does not require applicants to submit diversity statements, the number of students or faculty who respond to the diversity question could be affected.

"Typically, this institution has not required faculty candidates to submit a diversity statement with their application, some choose to do it," Stephen Spiro, associate provost of auxiliary services said. "Some other institutions require it but we haven't required it in the past and moving forward ... SB-17 will not allow us to require it."

UTD is unsure what the process and timeline for dismantling ODEI and DEI initiatives will look like as well as what specific centers will be affected. A Board of Regents meeting is set to take place in August and November to brainstorm definitive plans.

"We are still trying to understand what the bill means and how to work within the bill, what we can do what we cannot do,"

Everette said. "One thing we do know is that we at the University of Texas at Dallas and our administrators on campus are committed to still ensuring a safe campus, and a campus that is welcoming for all faculty, staff and students ... we are not looking to change that any time soon ... it's just a matter of how we can continue to live that out within this new legislation."

Depending on what offices shut down and what offices are not, DEI initiatives may have to go through student organizations to continue serving the community.

"That's something we might see moving forwards with this legislation, that students are doing a lot more than what has occurred in the past," Everett said. "We will certainly be here to help them every step of the way and provide them with whatever information, resources, support they need to do if it does have to come to that."

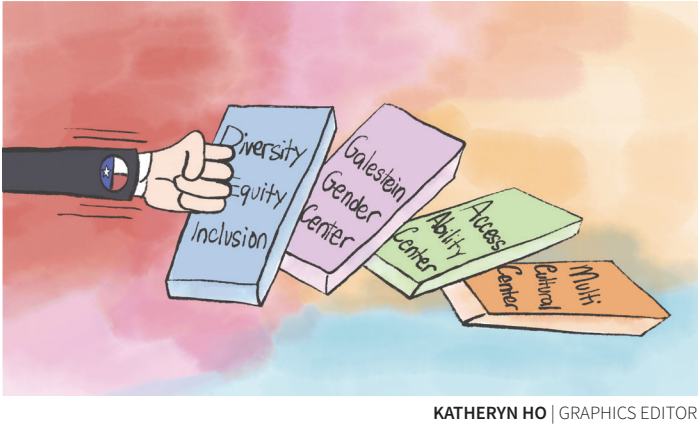
Everette said the new legislation is also putting university jobs at stake.

"By the new legislation, my job can no longer exist as it is," Everett said. "I hurt for our students. I got into higher education as a profession because I wanted to help students... and make sure that they had the resources and everything they needed to be successful... this legislation makes it harder to do that."



UTD | COURTESY

Above is a rendering of Phase II of the Edith and Peter O'Donnell Jr. Athenaeum. The second phase of this project includes a two-story, 53,000-square-foot performance venue with a 600-seat concert hall. The venue will also include choral and orchestral rehearsal rooms, classrooms, and office spaces.



KATHERYN HO | GRAPHICS EDITOR



